

Evening Telegraph

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1869.

THE DEATH OF EDWIN M. STANTON.

The announcement of this morning of the sudden and unexpected death of Hon. Edwin M. Stanton caused a shock such as has not been felt at the decease of any public man since Abraham Lincoln. Secretary Stanton was one of the great men of the age. The Rebellion brought him to the surface and proved his noble qualities, and the peculiar character of his services, no less than the remarkable manner in which he performed them, endeared him more than almost any of the statesmen of the day to the hearts of the loyal portion of the American people. Mr. Stanton's stern and uncompromising patriotism, his firmness, his courage, and his unyielding virtue, raised up for him a host of enemies among the traitors to their country, the Rebel sympathizers, and a whole army of political wire-pullers and office-seekers, who could not use him to advance their schemes. No man of our time has been more abused or pursued with greater malignity. But the very qualities that excited the wrath of his opponents are the ones that raised up for him steadfast and admiring friends who stood by him under every circumstance, and that secured for him the cordial and enthusiastic support of the substantial and law-abiding portion of the American people. On our first page we give a complete sketch of Mr. Stanton's life and public services, and it is unnecessary, therefore, to allude to them in this place in more than general terms. To his efficient administration of the War Department was due, as much as to any other cause, the total annihilation of the Rebellion, and it was to him that we in a great measure owe the discomfiture of the attempts on the part of traitors to regain a hold upon the powers of the Government after the Rebellion had been subdued. His nomination to the Supreme Bench a few days ago by the President was recognized as not only eminently proper in itself, but as a fitting recognition of his great services; and his prompt confirmation by the Senate sufficiently indicated the high estimation entertained for him by that body. His death is a loss to the nation—a loss that the nation cannot afford. Great statesmen are not numerous, and one by one those that we have are passing away from us, and the question is, Who shall take their places? In the death of Edwin M. Stanton the American people lose a statesman, a jurist, a devoted patriot, and an honest man, and the sorrow at the event will be as sincere as profound.

CHRISTMAS.

"Glorious to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men"—such words from angel lips have sanctified to-morrow, of all the days that make the circling years, to charity and to peace. Christmas has a lofty significance as a religious festival and commemoration of the "great joy" vouchsafed to a suffering world, and the warm heart of humanity has worthily chosen it for the special occasion of the recognition of the claims of the doctrine taught by Christ, and preached by the trumpet tones of Paul—the universal brotherhood!

This year may well and boldly echo the glad tidings, for it has been completed by hard-labored labor the visible bond by which the nations are united, and the peoples with linked hands now girdle the whole earth by the tangible chains by which rails of iron and new channels of water bind mankind in unity. In such blessings let the world rejoice, for the Pacific Railroad and Suez Canal become the types of the great moral work slowly but surely to be perfected. This is Christmas in its broader sense, but it has a simpler meaning by which it comes home to every individual as a duty and a pleasure.

The bonds of kindred, the claims of dependants, the needs of the poor, are by wholesome custom held in paramount consideration, and the day is set apart for deeds of kindness, benevolence, and generosity. We have called the custom wholesome; for, in the hard struggle for daily bread, necessity compels an undue regard for self and disregard of others, and it is well that the revolving year should bring about, with ever-recurring regularity, a season of "good-will to men." Family reunions and the interchange of simple tokens of esteem and remembrance are the pleasant ceremonies which belong to the day, and it is to be regretted that the general extravagance of the age has even tainted this good old-fashioned festival, and that too often the jolly old turkey dinner is altered into a grand entertainment, the Christmas seed-cake into French confectionery, and the child's stocking displaced by the jewel-box.

This is a sad change, as are all changes from simple pleasures to laborious ceremonial, and all those inroads by which fashion alters, by its exaggerations, wholesome amusement into burdensome duty, making a pain of pleasure. Ostentatious display and lavish expenditure, if they are not a crime, are certainly a blunder, for they defeat the very aim which they are intended to promote. Instead

of producing pleasure, they are the fruitful source of discontent, envy, and unhappiness. It is an over true tale that describes the little prince turning tearfully from the mechanical toys upon which thousands of frames had been lavished, to weep with envy at the happy lads making mud pies in the gutter. A child really enjoys mud pies more than he does an automaton, and the child is the father of the man in this respect as well as in many another.

A capacity for simple enjoyment can be cultivated, at least it ought not to be wilfully destroyed. It is from our simpler pleasures that we draw the purest and most lively joy in the present, and it is to them that we look back in after years, when things finer and grander have faded entirely from remembrance. There is in every one's memory the pleasant recollection of some slight token of regard, perhaps but a few words written or spoken, or a trifling gift which has cemented a friendship more strongly from the mere fact that the present conferred no obligation except a kindness, and merely bore the impress of feeling instead of the more sordid stamp of money.

Let Christmas—the good old-fashioned Christmas—return, then, for the delight of the children and those of larger growth who are wise enough to appreciate its blessings. With a simple, hearty, cheery, old-fashioned, open hand we extend to each of our readers the time-honored, true-hearted greeting—a merry Christmas!

WHAT ARE WE COMING TO?

That is the cry! We hear it from every lip, we see it in every journal, but we can find comfort in the fact that every age has made the same outcry before us. Addison castigated the girl of his period with as hearty and perhaps better English than the Saturday Review uses to bewhack her to-day, and Dante left the stock-brokers of his age hardly a leg to stand upon. One of the foremost thinkers of our time has comforted us with the assurance that "we are not as bad as we seem," and we want to believe his assertion—partly for the pleasure of it, and partly, it must be confessed, that we do seem—pretty bad! But may not this most unseemly seeming arise in some degree from the way we talk about it? The world is enjoying a perfect rapture of self-abuse; we are telling the most dreadful stories about ourselves, and when the facts are not quite bad enough, some clever individual touches them up a little, adding a slight depth of depravity here, and a little shading of brutality there, just to bring out the picture into better relief.

The last sensation! What a horrible phrase it is, and what horrors it is certain to include or portend! The very words are an abomination as well as the thing. But we do not believe it at all. The talking and writing world has been smitten with a contagion, a sort of epidemic, which has broken out in a very ugly eruption—of adjectives. The attack has been violent, but it has been short; the recovery is already commencing, and we must rejoice that the disease did not strike in. Cutaneous complaints are noisome, to be sure, but they are not dangerous, and are a very unpleasant but sure way of getting off bad humors.

This view of the subject cheers us hugely, and we are expecting a speedy reformation; a great many naughty words will be allowed to return to their resting-places in the dictionary instead of sweeping round on every breeze, and those things that are of modest and good report will regain their fitting prominence.

THE POPE ON TRIAL.

"Ours," said Guizot, "is an age of essay, testing, experiment," just before this same irreverent age put himself and the dynasty he supported to the test, and ignobly routed them. He did not go far enough to grasp the whole truth. If this nineteenth century is the grimmest, it is one of the justest of iconoclasts; if it proves all things, it is no less firm in holding fast to that which is good, no matter through what blood or loss. One fancy, too, that it is not without a certain cynical humor, from the fact that the false gods which are to be destroyed are found usually to voluntarily put themselves on trial, and so parade and perk themselves as to show the justice of their downfall. How long would our own Baal of slavery have stood intact, had it not been for its vauntings of a conquered Mexico, Cuba, and reopened slave trade, which brought it and its claims boldly before the common sense of the world?

That, after all, it is the intangible judge which rules the age. It is to nations what the terrible Nemesis of conscience is to individuals. It is time for any ancient sham to tremble when the grave common sense of men begins to ask, "Of what use is this thing? Has it not long ago ceased to serve its purpose? Why not bury its dead body?" Let it prank thereafter in what semblance of power it may, when the world has fixed its cool, measuring eyes upon it, it will presently grasp it in its iron hand, and if it be decayed or worthless will leave it, like slavery, a dead and crumbled mass.

Only a month or two ago the House of Lords, with that strange fatuity of judgment that seems to belong to unsound bodies, brought suddenly, and without warning, the aristocratic power of England upon the platform for trial at the bar of public opinion; but finding, perhaps, jury and judge render that they supposed, and the peril of a verdict imminent, they drew back as best they could, and put off the trial to a later day. Change of venue will serve them little. The worst of it was that their position in the few days of suspense was simply ludicrous: it was not even tragic. The people held up their rulers, royalty itself, for a little space, and surveyed critically the thing they had feared.

"I took his Majesty up in my hand," said Gulliver, in Lilliput "he was just as high as my thumb," and laughed to see him brandish his little sword." But finding his rough laughter frightened the toy king, he put him carefully down, and left him for a season.

Whether we be Catholics or Protestants, it is in vain for us to shut our eyes to the fact that it is the Papacy which is next to stand on trial, and that Pope Pius himself has brought it to the bar.

The adherents of the Roman Church were the first to see that she had utterly lost her old position. The world had fulfilled Galileo's threat to her, and moved, leaving her behind. Robe and chasuble were the same, and she kept about her the old hazy shimmer of incense and colored light. But inside of that?

Not only has temporal power dropped from her hand, but since the beginning of this century she has notably been a puppet in the hands of France and Austria, moved to suit their political ends. The wires have been bare, to be seen of all men.

Three centuries ago, whatever learning or research was to be found in Christendom belonged to the Roman Church. Since that, there is not a science or an art which has lightened the modern world that has not forced its way against the feeble, clogging hindrance of that Church. The great truths of the ordinary knowledges common to us all she is forced to slur over in her schools, lest they confute her history or the spirit which gives her name and identity. Her colleges and seminaries, even in this country, are avowedly simply schools for instruction in the languages, in manners and accomplishments. This antagonism to the live, earnest progress of humanity the shrewdest of her disciples have been busied in concealing.

The Pope has dragged it to light with a vengeance. Finding his syllabus (in which he arraigned the science, culture, and progress of the age as among the "eighty damnable heresies") fall dead, he summons the Ecumenical Council to sustain him in his attack. It is not Pere Hyacinthe alone who thinks him unwise in "thus proclaiming a divorce as impious as senseless between the Church and the society of the nineteenth century."

The Pantist brothers, with Hecker at their head in this country, and the keen-witted liberal fathers in Germany, would have been glad if this divorce could have been hidden from sight until they had engineered some unnatural marriage between them. They were striving hard to perform the operation of vivisection on the poor old Church: to infuse new blood into her veins, give her the reputation of German breadth of thought, Yankee acuteness, and Christian liberality. They persuaded us that the Church, whose fundamental doctrine is the denial of the right of private judgment, now implored "every man to believe himself created to do his own thinking." They laughed at the idea that "any one man, Pope or prelate, had the power of making his own opinion binding on others." They told us that the Church formerly only burned innovators from the kind wish to conceal from the world its own ignorance, but that it now desired to lead the van of liberal teachers. They came very near success, probably because the world concerned itself very little about their ancient mother.

But why, meanwhile, did they put no guard upon the Pope? How was he allowed to drag the Church, with her oldest rags of superstition tight about her, upon a platform—to call upon this practical, newspaper-reading world to kneel and give her allegiance as in days when kings were her servants? He had not even sense of the ludicrous enough to see the difference between Innocent, whose mere word drove John from the throne, and the fidgety old gentleman who so fears a squabble with a Scotch clergyman that he makes haste to answer a letter before it is written. He cannot blame men busy with the vital concerns of their age if they use their clearest glasses to look into the Church which claims absolute authority over them here and hereafter; if they examine her history, and inquire what she has done for the world, before they surrender their own freedom of thought, and accept this well-meaning but weak old gentleman as he so urgently requests them to do, as an infallible dictator in thought, the representative of God upon earth.

It would certainly have been better for this Church if Pope Pius could have been longer "lashed up among his friends." But for the cause of truth it is better that the Church itself, with its prestige of obsolete power and its amazing assumption of present authority, should be fairly brought to a final trial and fully assayed, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

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